

# critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current NYC & LA Entertainment Scenes

## Future NYC Theatre Openings

Mid-Summer-Vanderbilt 1/21/53. Paul Crabtree and Frank J Hale present a new play by Vina Delmar. Mark Stevens, Geraldine Page and Vicki Cummings featured, directed by Mr. Crabtree... The Crucible-Martin Beck 1/22/53. Kermit Bloomgarden presents the Jed Harris production of Arthur Miller's new play. Starring Arthur Kennedy and Walter Hampden, staged by Mr. Harris.

## Digests of Current NY Theatre Reviews

Dial M For Murder-Plymouth 10/29/52. Well done whodunit is how Marshall, Nation, and George Jean Nathan rate Frederick Knott's mystery starring Maurice Evans. Besides item of final latchkey sequence being a little weak, Marshall admits she was sufficiently taken in by the atmosphere and the acting to wonder, when she got to her door, whether the latchkey would fit. Entire cast praised with John Williams winning top honors. If you are willing to suspend your sense for a few hours you will enjoy this play, advises Nathan. Though he can think of more elevated ways of spending his time, he did find himself fascinated by this childish business. Capable acting company, Reginald Denham's cunning direction, and a confusing, yet interesting script, were a few of his reasons.

Two's Company-Alvin 12/15/52. Add two more con verdicts to the critical pan-wagon launched against new musical revue starring Bette Davis. Beaufort, Christian Science Monitor, who considers himself a fan of the movie star, can do nothing less than admire her courage. But courage, he reminds, is not quite the same thing as aptitude. The facts are that little of the song and sketch material is really first rate, and that Miss Davis is neither a singer, a dancer, nor a comedienne. Critic also reports that in spite of reviewers the show is a hit. Marshall, Nation, was even less kind. Reviewer states that star lacks volatility, variety, infectious and compelling gaiety of face, figure, voice, movement, and charm. Vulgarly, she notes, has several innings in a show that has everything, including a kitchen stove. Music, dancing also consider mediocre.

The Children's Hour-Coronet 12/18/52. Lillian Hellman's play is one of those rare pieces that is still good after 18 years, praises Gibbs, New Yorker. Except for slight softening of ending critic rates script as one of the most honest, perceptive and distinguished plays of our time. Kim Hunter, Katherine Emmet and Iris Mann were credited with superlative performances.

## Hits Revisited

Nancy Walker's performance in Pal Joey in the Gladys Bumps role gives the production a distinctive spark, lauds Gros, Variety. Critic notes that Miss Walker will have to leave hit musical soon due to forthcoming motherhood. Show otherwise remains exuberant with stars Vivienne Segal and Harold Lang continuing in socko groove... Audience of actors at Sunday night benefit for the Equity Welfare Fund performance of Time of the Cuckoo rated as among the most prompt and courteous audience Sheaffer, Eagle has ever seen. Audience also was quick to catch every humorous line and piece of amusing business. But he didn't notice any difference in the fine performances of the cast headed by Shirley Booth in the Arthur Laurents play. The Broadway legend that actors give their best performances for their colleagues seems to be a myth, he noted.

## Cincinnati Convention Notes

Second National Theatre Assembly held in Cincinnati Jan 1-2 informed that ANTA will have to disband unless financial aid received from all groups.

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' Off Broadway '  
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Blackfriars Guild next production opens Feb 2, a full length original by Brendan Larnen entitled Angelic Doctor, the biography of Thomas Aquinas...Thespis, the first Gilbert & Sullivan production, will be presented Jan 15-17 by Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company of New York at Joan Of Arc Center, 154 West 93rd, NYC. New music by Frank Miller ...Twelfth Night Club's Revel Jan 10 at 150 East 36th St, NYC, will feature original musical My Own True Darling...Pygmalion, staged by Eddie Dowling and presenting the Dublin players will be presented on stages of 6 Skouras Theatres during Jan...Equity Library Theatre presents Man and Superman Feb 11-16 at Lenox Hill Playhouse, Feb 20-21 at De Witt Clinton High School, Feb 27-28 at Bryant High School...20th Century Fox screened and recorded one performance of Ben Victor's musical revue Merry Go Round, staged at Amato Theatre. Original musical sponsored by students of Columbia University didn't receive any reviews in daily or trade press.

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' Vaudeville '  
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Current bill at Palace headed by Joe Termina, with Tien Tsi Liu Troupe, Helene Vernon Trio, Patsy Abbot, Berk & Hellow and Captain Shaw and Bobby...All other shows held over...Johnny Ray and Georgia Gibbs won top praise of trade reviewers for new show at Capitol. Francis, Billboard, admitted that whether or not Mister Emotion's uninhibited chanting style is your dish of tea or not, you must admit he is a master showman, while Jose, Variety, rated bill for its balance, variety and headline value... Sarah Vaughan, Illinois Jacquet's orchestra, Teddy Hale, Stump and Stumpy combine to make a well paced, interested all negro show at Paramount, trade reviewers agreed... Roxy's ice show, based on first viewing, needs more rehearsal, commented Rolontz, Billboard. But he okayed show otherwise as eye filling spectacle with good skating, colorful costumes and first rate sets.

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' Book Notes '  
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Knopf will publish Eric Bentley's "In Search of Theatre" in March...Harper's has published John Van Druten's "Playwright at Work"...Holt will publish David Ewen's "The Story of Jerome Kern" in March, and "Sardi's", by Richard Gehman and Vincent Sardi, Sr, also in March..."Theatre World Annual (London)" will be published in America by Macmillan in February. Publisher also issuing "Hamlet Through the Ages," compiled by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson..."Great Stars of the American Stage" compiled by Dan Blum, adds pro reviews from Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, and Francis, Billboard, while Hobe, Variety, voted con because selection was often too indiscriminating.

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' LA Theatre Notes & Reviews '

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Billie Burke will star in Carthay Circle production of Lindsey and Crouse's Life With Mother, opening Jan 26...Theatre Guild's National Company of Oklahoma returns to Biltmore starting Jan 18...Informal fund raising drive for Pasadena Playhouse aimed at motion picture industry...Las Posadas first production of year will be Que Muchacha due to open Jan 7 at Padua Hills...See How They Run presented by East Los Angeles Junior College Arena Theatre starting Jan 14...Highland Playhouse is now rehearsing for coming productions of The Doughgirls and Night Must Fall...Morgan Theatre, Santa Monica opens Private Lives Jan 8...Aaron Slick from Punkin Crick continues at Theatre Go Round at Studio City.

Paris '90, Cornelia Otis Skinner's one woman production, okayed by LA drama critics as unique solo revue. Schallert, Times, rates performance as probably the star's most remarkable one woman show. Coffey, Mirror, felt uncomfortable during several of the sketches, such as the ones about the lion tamer and the Boston school teacher. The others he found charming, with the proper sense of theatricality and versatility. Bongard, News, was frankly surprised present production isn't a casual women's club entertainment. Critic enjoyed most of sketches, including 2 his colleagues didn't think much of.

Diverse views filed on Montmartre, new play based on Pierre LaMure's book "Moulin Rouge," as produced at Circle Theatre. Mesmer, News, okayed presentation which stars Gene Reynolds as Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec. Her minor complaint was that lead failed to win whole hearted sympathy as the crippled artist. Critic also reminded script is for adults only. Except for fact that play bears too heavily on sex talk, Rialtan, Herald Express, thought play had a vigor and garish reality that saves it from mere adolescent sensationalism. Constance Dowling shared honors with Reynolds. Greene, Examiner, panned show mostly because of a very poor translation by an unnamed author. Translation simply didn't turn out a dramatization. With a rewritten and dramatic script, he suggested, play might well become a drama of importance for the materials are on hand.

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' Resolutions for Theatre 1953 '

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Full list of year end wishes recorded by Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun. Included are hopes that Mary Martin will appear in Kind Sir next fall, somebody will find a good play for Edna Best, and also suitable plays for Jose Ferrer and Alfred Lunt. He also wishes that somebody in '53 will have the imagination and good sense to realize that Fritzi Scheff's autobiography has more drama and heart than any dozen stories or operettas based on pale copies of this famed star. Others Hawkins would like to see onstage include Mae West, Ina Claire and Helen Broderick.

Interesting brace of resolutions for assorted theatre workers filed by Kerr, Herald Tribune. Producers were urged to fill their houses on opening nights, even if relatives have to be drafted. Scene designers were urged to order less scenery. Actors were urged to do more acting onstage. Stagehands were urged to watch their cues more carefully. The crewmen were warned that in these days when they were being paid as handsomely as the average actor, it might be time to give their work the same critical going over the players get. Playwrights were urged to stop apologizing in print for their fruitier imaginative attempts, either before or after the reviews are in.

Chapman, News, only has one promise to make during the coming year--he promises to read the programs of the events he attends. This would avoid his prize of the past year when he kept calling the HMS Pinafore production The Pirates of Penzance.



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! Green Room Department!  
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PLAYWRITING ADVICE... Playwrights who want to write according to patterns laid down by others should aim at the sophisticated comedy of sex dalliance, witty enough to be sprightly, naughty enough to be piquante, and shallow enough to be easily forgotten, suggests NBC Leon Pearson... Not much point in reviving The Children's Hour, pans Chapman, News, who notes it is too bad Lillian Hellman doesn't have a new play about sex conversion... John Hess, author of The Grey Eyed People shouldn't throw away his Dramatists Guild card, urges Keating, Cue, for the critic is sure the TV writer has it in him to write a really good comedy... Cue editor also wanted to record an item he left out of his original review of the Hess play, that Tony Bickley gave an excellent performance.

COLUMN TIPS... 1500 Equity members worked in NYC post office during Christmas rush, reports Winchell... Managing editor of NY Times has ordered cut down in space for theatre news, reveals Variety... Peter Lorre taking singing and dancing lessons in hopes of doing Broadway musical, informs Kilgallen.

ACTORS PLIGHT... Annual Equity report issued in actors' union monthly magazine reveals once again that professional theatre today is no place to make a living. Report shows that average actor worked 10 weeks during year on stage at average yearly income of \$825. One fourth of Equity's 7000 members earned less than \$335, and only one in six worked as much as six months. 892 members earned more than \$3500 figure union sets as living wage. Once again summer theatre was responsible for largest share of employment. Report concludes that actor breaking into theatre will have more difficult time than actor aiming at other mediums. Rice, Post, adds post script that mothers should hang their children on a hickory limb before they let them go near the theatre.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... American critics have no fear of being worn out through being forced to see too many plays, Watts, Post, reminds "Stage"... Next 2 or 3 months will yield critics' prize play of season, predicts Morehouse, World Telegram & Sun... American and British actors' union should stop their feuding, warns Coleman, Mirror. Theatrical destinies of 2 countries are too traditionally bound to afford such a silly conflict.

INTERVIEW HI-LITES... Toughest thing for young actors to learn is to play together, Loring Smith, Be Your Age, told Hawkins, WT&S... George Axelrod, The Seven Year Itch, is one playwright who can't claim that he starved in a garret, Rice, Post, reports. Author has 480 radio & TV scripts to his credit, plus 2 novels... Arthur Schwartz doubts if he will do another play until next fall, he informed Morehouse, WT&S. He wants to do something that's exciting and fresh. Author also predicted that Council of Living Theatre's "Main Street to Broadway" will play an important part in a great new revival of road shows.

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! Theatre News Round Up !  
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Whistler's Grandmother closed after 24 performances... Kermit Bloomgarden, Gertrude Macy, Leonard Sillman, William Hawkins, and Milton Weintraub discuss "Are High Costs Destroying American Theatre" at 4th Greater NY ANTA forum of season on Jan 8 at ANTA Playhouse... Shows which continue 7 PM Monday curtain include: The King and I, South Pacific, Wish You Were Here and The Fourposter... History repeating itself with Providence, RI, Bureau of Licenses banning Tobacco Road; new production by Edward Gould plans to defy ban... Stella Andrews back in The Deep Blue Sea after slight accident... Stanley Prager to resign from Two's Company, to be replaced by Loney Lewis... NYC Councilmen Quinn promised speedy action on new theatre building code changes.

